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Farm Women's Short Course, Combined Education, Recreation, and Inspiration

A radio talk by Miss Sara E. Coyne, State Home Demonstration Leader, Kingston, Rhode Island, delivered August 7, 1935, over NBC radio stations of the National Farm and Home Hour.

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Can you imagine, a woman who has not been away from home for over-night in ten years, breaking away from her family for one whole week? That is what happened at the Seventh Annual Rural Women's Short Course this year.

I overheard Mrs. Brown tell Mrs. Smith it was the first time she had even been away from her family, but they had insisted upon her coming. The boys had even saved the money for her expenses, because there had been so much talk around the neighborhood about last year's short course that they wanted their mother to go this year.

The eventful day was clear and not too warm. The women came by train, bus, and car, from every corner of the State (even though Rhode Island isn't as big as Texas, it still has corners). Why did they come, do you ask? Because they have heard about the opportunities offered to make new friends and learn new ways of doing homely tasks, which enable them to better carry on.

Mrs. Brown found it most difficult to decide which course she should take, as she was so interested in every one. She wanted to take the play directing and stage craft, so that she could be more helpful back in her community as they are just starting a players group. Budgeting would be of so much personal help and would benefit the entire family by showing how to make ends meet and help in providing cash for many needs. The handicraft will be such a joy later on when the home canning and gardening are over. Something new and beautiful for the home is always a joy and an inspiration especially when we make it ourselves.

Then there is always the problem of three meals a day every day of the year at home. Any help in making food preparation simpler for the family, just had to be included. She was so glad she had brought a large notebook in which to keep a record of all the information available. "They'll never believe me if I don't have it right down in black and white to show them", she said.

The afternoon lectures offered much inspiration. Who doesn't get inspired and enthusiastic over flower gardens and the things one can do with flowers to make the home more attractive?

However, the project from which Mrs. Brown said she got the most inspiration and information as well, was the day of the panel discussion, when twelve women discussed the value of the "Live at Home Program". Each woman gave her own experience in handling various problems of interest to every homemaker in the audience.

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The first speaker who lives on a farm, told how her family ranging in ages from 4 to 75, worked together during the canning season, canning by budget. They devoted three days each week to this project. Working together, they accomplish a great deal not only in money saved and foods canned, but in happy family relationships, child development, and character building. Mrs. A. figured her canned fruits and vegetables worth \$75 to her family. This did not include 1/2 cow, 2 veal calves, and 50 cans of chicken, put under glass and pressure. Who could fail to be inspired to try canning at least a few jars after hearing this story.

Another speaker, Mrs. C. who also is from a farm home, told about clothing her large brood of nine, according to a budget plan. For the past three years each member of the family has known just what articles of clothing have been purchased for her or him and how much they cost. The college and high school girls get more money than the others but in return they make all their dresses and also those for the younger children. It has become a family problem. Mother does very little of the actual sewing these days. Father and the boys spend most of their clothes money on dungarees. A suit seems to last them a long time compared to the girls' clothes. Said Mrs. Brown, "If Mrs. C. can find time to keep a clothing cost budget and do all there is to be done in running the home on a fifty acre farm, surely we would be doing very little to try a personal budget. So a clothing budget went down in Mrs. Brown's notebook. She must do that, too, when she got home.

Mrs. W. told how her family carries on a recreation program during the winter months when it is difficult to get out to parties and entertainments away from home. The family is divided into groups (there being eleven altogether, there is no lack for company). One group plans a dinner party and invites the others, written invitations are sent and acceptances are returned in like manner. If the dinner is formal the entire party dresses for dinner. Every point of etiquette is observed by all members. Games or entertainment of some kind follows. Often in the afternoon two of the girls will have a table of bridge and invite two sisters, and refreshments are served just as at a regular bridge party. This form of recreation and the lessons taught by it and sponsored in the home are never forgotten. The children learn many things besides correct manners, such as the value of congenial companionship and the pleasures to be derived from hospitality.

The outstanding evening entertainment was the Old Fashioned Dress Review. Dresses, bonnets, and shawls from five generations were shown, some of them looking quite up to date in many ways. Seventy-five women took part in this program.

The one-act play put on by the women who took play directing was so interesting, amusing, and instructive in showing how much could be accomplished for community recreation in so short a time. Mrs. Brown feels encouraged to do more with plays especially with the young people who are at home with few community opportunities for amusement.

The thrill of thrills was meeting the President of the College, the Director of Extension, and many of the faculty members that teach our boys and girls here at the State College, at the President's Reception given for the women. "The College seems to belong to us more since we have been here", said Mrs. Brown.

When Mrs. Brown was asked what the short course had meant to her she emphatically answered: "The opportunity to meet and talk with so many women who have developed ways of successfully meeting every-day problems, is to me the most inspiring of all the week's activities."

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